

Fremont School District Deliberative Session – Minutes
February 4, 2023
9:00am at the Ellis School

Approved
as amended
2/14/2023

Present were: School Board Members: Gordon Muench (Chair), Brittany Thompson (Vice Chair) Nicole Cloutier, Greg Fraize, Jane Pellegrini, Business Administrator: Nathan Castle, School Superintendent: Ellen Halliday, School Attorney: Huddy Grandy, School Moderator: James Thompson, School District Clerk: Shawn Perreault, Budget Committee Members: Mary Jo Holmes (Chair), Pat Martel (Vice Chair), Josh Yokela, Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Emily Phillips, Town Administrator: Heidi Carlson, and various members of the Fremont community.

J. Thompson opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and reviewed the meeting's agenda. He discussed the exits and where bathrooms were located. School Attorney and School Clerk were introduced and then the School Board and Budget Committee introduced themselves. He proceeded to explain the rules that will govern this meeting. The process for speaking on or amending a warrant article once it is opened to the floor for discussion. He then explained "calling the question", "Point of Order" and how voting will take place on the warrant articles once discussion is over. Rules were adopted.

B. Thompson started the meeting with highlights from the 2022-2023 school year. Some of those included: The new reading program, community projects the students have completed, professional development, community meetings with all the grades and other accomplishments.

G. Muench highlighted the facility projects that were completed during the 2022-2023 school year. They included the following: Installation of new playground equipment, enhanced security measures, filtration system, paving and more.

Article 01 District Officers: To choose the following School District Officers:

School Board Member 1 for 3 years
Joanna Ruiz
Amy Powers

School District Moderator 1 for 1 year
James Thompson

School District Clerk 1 for 1 year
Shawn Perreault

School District Treasurer 1 for 1 year
Angela T. O'Connell

J. Thompson read the candidates that have declared their intent to run and which offices they were running for. This article is not amendable.

Article 2 Collective Bargaining Agreement – Teachers: Shall the Fremont School District vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Fremont School Board and the Fremont Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing

level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2023-2024	\$211,207
2024-2025	\$174,199
2025-2026	\$165,241

and further to raise and appropriate \$211,207 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, such sum representing the

additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. (Majority vote required) Recommendations: Fremont School Board 5-0/Fremont Budget Committee 6-2

J. Thompson read the article. G. Fraize made a motion to move the article, J. Pellegrini seconded.

Andy Kohlhofer (Main Street) – Asked if the new contract had a performance-based requirement for teacher raises? Can step increases be held if a teacher is not meeting or lacks results/performance?

B. Thompson responded stating confirming a teacher's raise can be held back for not performing. In addition, an additional day was built into the contract for all new hires and 1/6 per diem pay was added for teachers that need to cover a class or attend a meeting during their prep time.

G. Muench stated it is the boards responsibility to be competitive in the market to keep and get quality teachers.

M. Abney (Whitter Drive) – stated we used to have one of the lowest tax rates in New Hampshire and now we have one of the highest. She had to leave her job at Ellis to seek a higher paying job. We have highly educated and qualified teachers that we will lose if we don't support this contract.

Andrea Bancroft (Whitter Drive) – Shared that it is easy to focus on negative messages. The community should be made aware of all the positives the staff and school do. Most teachers are coming in very early and leaving late. They have worked programs such as Chorus and Band into their day and had to be very flexible in building the time. This allows more students to take advantage of these programs. She spoke about programs and awards that other staff members have achieved. She wanted everyone to know that 14 staff members left last year all because of the pay.

Andy Kohlhofer (Main Street) – Feels that the contract needs to have a performance aspect to it. If a teacher is outstanding their pay should reflect that and if a teacher is not doing well, they shouldn't be receiving raises.

J. Bolduc (Chester Road) – She was part of the negotiation team. She spoke on the requirement that teachers need to meet and degrees they must have. There is a lot of training these teachers do and most have returned to school and obtained Masters and more.

G. Fraize made a motion to restrict reconsideration, N. Cloutier seconded. Motion passed.

Article 3 Special Meeting: Shall the Fremont School District, if Article 2 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 2 cost items only? (Majority vote required) Recommendations: Fremont School Board 4-0-1/Fremont Budget Committee 3-5.

J. Thompson began by reading the article and purpose. B. Thompson made a motion to move article, seconded by N. Cloutier.

J. Yokela (Tibbets Road) – Questioned if this article needed to be there. He stated the School Board already has the power to call special meetings and questioned if a NO vote by voters would stop the board from moving forward with a special meeting regardless.

Attorney Grandy stated this was required by law and she was happy to review the RSA with anyone interested after the meeting.

Article 4 Operating Budget: Shall the Fremont School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the First Session, for the purposes set forth, therein, totaling \$12,445,335? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$12,490,379, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Fremont School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Majority vote required) Recommendations: Fremont School Board 5-0/Fremont Budget Committee 8-0

J. Thompson read the article. M. Holmes made a motion to move the article, seconded by P. Martel.

G. Muench reviewed the highlights to the increase in the budget: Increases were seen in health insurance, contractual salaries, mandated special education costs, transportation, dental insurance and Sanborn tuition. We saw decreases in salaries due to employee turnover, New Hampshire retirement rate and they reduced staffing by one teacher and one para professional. He also stated that although enrollments are down in all communities, Fremont is seeing a slower decline.

Andy Kohlhofer (Main Street) – asked for clarification on some line items, such as insurance and decrease in teacher salaries.

G. Muench stated that some of these changes were due to hiring new teachers at a lower salary than the teacher leaving. In addition, some staff that might not have needed health insurance and others might have added family.

Andy Kohlhofer – Asked about the increase to the Superintendent's salary as well as making the principal position part of the job.

G. Muench – stated that they added to the number of days she is here. He also stated that knowing what is involved in the job of Superintendent and Principal he would not be in favor of combining the positions. That Fremont needs both of these positions as they are.

Andy Kohlhofer – wanted to know what items were in the Maintenance agreement.

N. Castle – stated the agreement covers the software the school uses, electronic filing system and the school website.

Andy Kohlhofer – questioned the tuition increase and asked if that included an increase in the number of students or just fees.

N. Castle – stated the increase reflect 5 additional students and a 5% tuition increase.

Andy Kohlhofer – expressed his wishes to see the school list the books and curriculum the teachers/school are using. He feels this would help him stay informed as a member of the community.

H. Kimball (Sandown Road) – She is a current Ellis staff member. She is the wellness teacher as well as the athletic director and a coach. She reviewed some of her equipment in the gym, what was donated and things being duct taped to avoid the cost of replacements. She stated that a number of equipment donations are given to the school because they are no longer top quality to the organization given them. An example would be the basketballs given to her from the FAA. She and her fellow teachers do everything they can to keep cost down and sometimes even pay out of their own pockets.

M. Abney (Whitter Drive) – stated anyone can asked the school and teachers questions. Nothing is secret and everyone is happy to discuss what they are doing with anyone. The community also needs to have trust in the staff.

B. Thompson made a motion to restrict reconsideration of article 4, seconded by N. Cloutier. Motion passed.

Article 5 Appropriate to EFT from Fund Balance: Shall the Fremont School District vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the previously established expendable trust fund, known as the Ellis School Building and Grounds Maintenance Fund. This sum to come from June 30, 2023 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2023. No amount to be raised from additional taxation. (Majority vote required) Recommendations: Fremont School Board 5-0/Fremont Budget Committee 7-1

J. Thompson read the article. B. Thompson made a motion to move the article, seconded by G. Fraize.

Andy Kohlhofer – stated he was one of the individuals that started the trust funds. They are used to avoid having to take out bonds, which would have a huge single year tax impact on the town.

G. Fraize – wanted to make sure that voters understood this money was already taxed and would not increase this year's tax rate.

N. Cloutier – wanted the voters to know that the original amount they were going to seek was \$100,000. The board dropped it to the \$50,000 with the hopes of still putting money in, but having less impact on the town.

M. Rydeen made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Perreault. Meeting was adjourned at 9:56.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Perreault", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shawn Perreault, School District Clerk